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AUTHOR Haughey, Margaret; Murphy, Peter J.
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ABSTRACT

The demand for postsecondary education on a part-time basis has been rising rapidly in Canada, due in part to the growing need of students to maintain full-time employment and due also to increasing requests for continuing professional education. Since part-time students are often unable to attend regularly scheduled classes and may find frequent trips to the campus from their places of work impossible (particularly when they live in remote locations such as those of rural British Columbia), the universities must seek new ways of meeting these clients' needs. For effective delivery of professional continuing education, the ideal approach might be to cooperate with professional organizations to provide requested services, to develop new services based on the needs of the educational marketplace, and to assess potential learners' skills and knowledge to help identify the needs that exist. The Division of University Extension at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, has turned to distance education, satellite transmission of educational television, and telephone hookups to provide real time interaction between instructors and distant students. Costs are met in part by providing necessary supplementary printed materials only to those officially registered. (PGD)

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Extending Continuing Professional Education in an Era of Fiscal Constraint

Margaret Haughey, Ph.D.

Coordinator, Distance Education

and

Peter J. Murphy, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education

University of Victoria, British Columbia.

presented at the

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As Allen Tough (1979) has documented, professionals as a group are heavily committed to life-long learning. The expanding knowledge base, the increasing sophistication of clientele, the issue of compulsory relicencing all act as forces on the professional and encourage him to keep abreast of developments in his field. Yet despite natural inclination and external motivation, the reality of continuing professional education may be difficult to achieve. In British Columbia, an area of 338,180 square miles, with a population of 2½ million, many professionals who live outside the urban population band which borders the southern boundary of the province have few opportunities for professional development. Living in small rural communities in relatively isolated areas, these professionals find that professional development activities are frequently oriented to their urban colleagues, the costs of travel are prohibitive, and the time away from their profession too lengthy.

The present economic downturn has further emphasized a trend that has already emerged in Canadian Universities: the rise of the part-time student. Rowntree (1983:18) gave some indication of this trend for Canada when she commented:

> In 1979 more than a quarter of a million people, 52 percent aged 30 and over, were registered as part-time students in degree programs. It is projected that by the year 2000, enrolment in part-time degree credit programs at universities will have grown to more than a third of a million students.

Given this shift to part-time studies, the traditional format for delivery of university education needs re-examination and modification. More than ever before, students who would normally enter university after high school graduation are delaying their education in order to obtain financing, by entering the job

market. For those who move away from university centres or who opt not to come to university on high-schol graduation, the relocation costs increase with time so that subsequent entry into a regular university program becomes curtailed. The economic ramifications of a decision to remain in a smaller centre where job opportunities are still available and economic growth possible can prelude a student from obtaining a post-secondary education in the traditional full-time format.

Besides lack of accessibility to university programs, other problems face part-time students. For those who can access courses, they may find the late afternoon or evening course selection very restricted with so few options that they are unable to meet degree requirements. The library may be available on a limited basis only. There may be no academic advising or personal counselling services open. They may be barred from scholarships or grants because of their part-time status.

The universities, therefore, have to examine the place of the part-time student in the university system. As Cross (1983:b) noted;

> "The first priority of the adult learner is not college, but job, family, and an array of other adult responsibilities that serve an enhacers, detractors, and sometimes inhibitors of education. Higher education faces unaccustomed competition for the time and attention of students. It cannot do what suits its institutional convenience, assuming that students can and will go along with it".

There are other cogent reasons for reexamining the traditional delivery mechanisms for post-secondary education. "There were 215,000 part-time undergraduate students in Canadian universities in 1980-1981 and 132,000 were women (61%)". (CAAE, 1984:10). For women in particular, part-time studies is an important second chance of education. Furthermore, the major economic trends identified by the CAAE Report were the continued growth in the participation rate

of women in the workforce, which in 1982 was 50 percent, the continued rise in unemployment for young people especially beyond the Heartland and the continued shift into the service industries. When the prognosis for the "new information technologies" with its impact on office workers, is added (Menzies, 1981) the importance of providing educational opportunities to this groups becomes even more pressing and important for Canada.

Continuing professional education needs are also evident in the increasing numbers of professional groups who seek further eduactional opportunities of both a credit and professional development nature. The nursing profession has mandated that the entry qualification into nursing by the year 2000 will be a baccalaurate degree. Other groups are examining the use of continuing education credits or re licensing provisions.

Traditionally professional organizations have looked only to the universities to provide continuing education opportunities, but today this is no longer the case, with professional schools, universities, community colleges and professional associations themselves all vying for clientele. Lillian Hohmann (1980:90) in the recent book "Power and Conflict in Continuing Education" concluded that there are three models of current practice; (a). the service model where the organization acts as a modern-day missionary providing continuing education to knowledge-hungry practitioners who request its services. The organization does the needs assessment, content choice, program design and eventual delivery. (b). The marketing model where product marketing techniques are used to determine what will sell, and to help package it to ensure that it will sell. The demise of established markets and the loss of their monopoly position has encouraged many institutions to be more active in identifying and wooing potential clients and providing what they want, and (c). the performance model where surveys of members' practices and extent of knowlege are used as the data base basis for

developing continuing education programs, often on an individual basis. In this model the emphasis is on the learners performance. Hohmann goes on to identify the strengths and weakness of each model and to suggest that combining the cooperation between university and professional organization in the service model with the quality emphasis and competitive nature of the marketing approach and the focus on learners' needs in the performance model would provide a more realistic and appropriate model.

At the University of Victoria, the Division of University Extension coordinates all continuing professional education activities from its professional schools, Law, Education, Childcare, Social Work, Health Sciences, Nursing, Engineering (a recent addition), the Sciences and Public Administration. In all of these fields there are strong professional associations. To date, the University has used aspects of the service and marketing models. Not only is the institution approached by client groups and asked to provide service but also it actively identifies groups with particular characteristics whose needs it can meet. Few professional associations or university programs have used the performance model which is based on tested competencies, given the extensive commitment needed in personnel and finances. Houle (1980:8) describes one continuing education study (Lindsay, Morrison and Kelley, 1974) which uses this approach.

The university's mandate to serve the higher education needs of adults throughout British Columbia has resulted in the development of an extensive off-campus operation which organizes one to three day workshops by faculty throughout the province based on specific requests. Beside these credit-free activities, University Extension also coordinates various off-campus degree programs. While in both areas the majority of the programming is face-to-face, the escalation in demand combined with the economic factors involved have encouraged the use of distance education delivery methods.

Recently as part of an overall examination of its goals, the Division identified trends in continuing professional education and considered their impact on its professional continuing education sector. The first trend identified was an increased emphasis on space-free, time-free education. There has been a general movement away from the annual conference as the major continuing education activity, to workshops or sessions which meet the concerns of a small group. These in turn are being increasingly augmented and possiby superceded by opportunities for self-directed learning. At the same time there has been a supporting trend away from general topics to specific information.

Secondly, professional associations are becoming much more active in the identification of their member's needs. From the university's point-of-view this suggests that we may be increasingly presented with requests for programming, without any prior involvement in needs assessment. Thirdly, as a corollary, professional associations may offer the programs themselves, in effect becoming a competitor with educational institutions. The potential waste in time and resources strongly encourages collaboration. Fourthly, the university may find its leadership emerging in specific areas such as evaluation, or instructional design rather than covering the broad spectrum of organizational skills identified in the service model. Furthermore, since the new knowledge being developed is as often outside the university as within it, professional organizations may seek the content expertise elsewhere.

Fifthly, a trend towards the development of interprofessional programs was identified. Especially in areas in the social sciences where knowledge bases are shared, or where specific professional skills are similar there is increased acceptance of interprofessional programming.

Finally, the present economic times constrain the amount of programs offered by professional associations or a university on their behalf. The debate on educational

costs which saw the provision of publically-supported high schools, then community and university college education has been increasingly resolved in terms of a user pay doctrine. Educators may argue that "Knowledge is power on the new frontier of the Learning Society" (Cross, 1982:2) or that "a society which refuses to remove barriers to educational opportunity is failing short of the demoncratic ideal (Porter, 1965) or indeed a government task force (Task Force on Employment Opportunities for the 80's, 1981:86)may suggest:

> Governments must encourage a continuing educational system which individuals can enter and leave throughout their lives. This should facilitate retraining and upgrading as well as late entry into training programs. They should remove all barriers which discourage mature students from returning to school and completing training or retraining programs.

None the less, present economic constraints have made any fiscal policy changes unlikely. Increasingly, the cost of continuing professional education will be borne by the individual practitioner. In turn, the demand for content specific individual, oriented, self-instructional learning materials will increase. Therefore, the use of new technology and distance education delivery systems will receive increased emphasis. An examination of part-time credit programming reflected similar trends including the use of degree programs as a major component of recurrent education.

At the University of Victoria, we have been involved in the delivery of learning materials to distance learners since 1977. At first we used print with some audio-cassette support only. Then in 1978 we were involved in experiments with the use of the Canadian Hermes satellite for education, and following these with subsequent ANIK-B and ANIK-C satellites. Students at receiving centres, most often in community colleges could see and hear the instructor via television and the student could talk to the instructor by merely pressing a button and

speaking into the mike or speaker phone in front of him. Such a system provided a situation similar to that in a face-to-face class in that students could interject and talk to the instructor and each other and be heard by all participating.

When the experimental phase ended, the government on the basis of the data collected, decided to set up a non-profit society, the Knowlege Network of the West, (KNOW) to act as animator and carrier of educational programs in British Columbia. The first result was a rapid escalation in the quality of the television facilities which was, in turn, reflected in the programming. Another result was the development of a public television network. British Columbia is the most highly cabled Canadian province with over 86 percent of homes linked to a cable network. Once the signal was carried via cable it became available in people's homes. The 2-way interactive audio capacity of the satellite became impossible to use. Instead the learner now accessed the instructor via a long-distance telephone call which was amplified so that the student's questions as well as the instructor's response could be heard by all listeners. While the use of two toll-free lines made the instructor accessable to everyone, the audio system no longer allowed for the flow of natural conversation among students. Instead each spoke to the instructor only.

Since September, 1982, we have been sending our video signal via microwave to the Knowledge Network centre in Vancouver where it is uplinked to the satellite. This has enabled us to use our own studio, saving a two hour ferry trip to Vancouver and providing a much less traumatic experience for instructors. It has also been an opportunity to experiment in linking a audio-teleconferencing bridge to the long-distance telephone lines, thereby allowing a number of students to converse with each other and the instructor at the same time.

Since 1978, we have produced four hours of live interactive satellite programming per week during the September to May period each year, as well as programs us ing audio-conferencing, audiotapes, videotapes and print combinations.

Most of these have been credit courses, some have been professional development activities and a few are community education programs. The continuing professional educational programs vary from "Nursing Assessment" a professional update for nurses which had 22 - 2 hour sessions to single time programs such as "Madeline Hunter talks to teachers", a one hour program where Madeline Hunter, who was on campus as a Visiting Scholar outlined her research on secondary school teaching and received questions from teachers throughout the province. One example, now in development is a professional development program for nurses on "Foot Care for the Elderly". This will use broadcast television delivery with print support, and can be repeated as necessary. We have subsequently repackaged some of these programs for use by individuals or small groups. Major non-credit programs include a Certificate Program in Computer Based Information Systems and one in Museum Studies. The CBIS Certificate Program is targeted at managers who need to use data from rather than program information systems. In the foundat ion course on the receipt of a deposit fee from students, they were sent a comput er and diskettes. The major instructional carrier was a print course manual with program examples being on disc and six case studies of organizations who used data processing being televised. The Program of Advanced Studies in Cultural Resource Management uses a folio of charts and slides with accompanying text and videotapes to provide instruction.

Our credit course offerings have been part of on-going part-time degree programs. They include a series of Nursing courses with credit to a baccalaurate degree in Nursing. In Public Administration, the courses form part of a diploma program for public sector employees which has baccalaurate status with the School of Public Adminstration, and can be credited towards a Masters degree. In Education, our most recent offerings are courses in Elementary Reading from the elementary undergraduate program and course development has started on another

course (Mathematics) in that program. Our Child care and Social Work part-time credit programs have used distance delivery methods other than interactive satellite. The Child Care courses were delivered using audio-conferencing and print while the Social Work courses have used print and local tutors. Our course enrolment figures vary but the average would be about 100 students. Completion rates run betweeen 80 and 100 pecent.

We use a project team model in developing all distance education courses. The team includes a project manager, who is the administrator for the course and the extension academic coordinator and whose functions are budget and student services (advertising, counselling, admin). The content specialist is the academic approved by the department or faculty to be responsible for the academic quality. The development of a course outline and subsequent elaboration of content are done by the content specialist in conjunction with the distance education consultant. The consultant provides intructional design expertise and acts as a learner during course development. The consultant is also responsible for all production of materials including the print package, video or audiotapes or television prorams. From our experience, this model shares the development of the materials and provides for a quality product.

All distance education projects are approved by the individual faculty or department and by an Extension committee prior to development. We are one of four major higher education institutions in the province and since we all have a provincial mandate we have collaborated on a number of projects, for example, of our credit nursing courses are being offered in conjunction with U.B.C. and a computer course is being developed with O.L.I. the Open Learning Institute.

Future developments include the accessing of a second satellite channel for provincial broadcasts and the completion of a two-way audio-video closed circuit system linking the three universities, the teaching hoispitals and the law courts.

This system will allow us to provide classroom instruction for students at any campus, to provide seminar settings for faculty and meeting facilites for administ rators. Preliminary pilot broadcasts among the Vancouver sites has been very successful.

Research on distance education has tended to focus on evaluation of individual programs, and much has been learned from the them.

The use of a public access delivery system for continuing professional education has certain advantages:

- You can reach a large audience at little inconvenience to themselves
- You can provide up-to-date information soon after it becomes known
- You can provide programs for professionals which they would be unable to obtain in any other way due to geographic location, costs or time constraints.
- Since it is a public network, you may also educate the consumer as well as the professional

There are, however, also a number of potential problems associated with interactive satellite delivery of credit-free continuing professional education:

- Because it is publicly available at the flick of a switch, it is difficult to recover costs. Programs are designed to place heavy emphasis on the accompanying print material thereby encouraging serious viewers to register for the program.
- Programs need to be structured to meet the level of the knowlegeable professional not the bottom 30 percent. Hence programs may not make sense to lay viewers; a potential problem for the Network itself.
- Interaction can be difficult to engender since professionals are expressing opinions which can be heard throughout the province. Further, in 'good' continuing professional education programs, the emphasis is on the application of theory to practice, and the use of learners' experiences as

essential data in designing learning experiences. Because of the public nature of the medium, a learner in a small rural centre is unlikely to describe a client's problems over the satellite since the client may be also watching. We found this a particular problem in one of our Social Work courses and now recognize how we should design the learner package to accommodate this.

Credit courses do not have these problems. Instead we have found our enrollments and the demands for courses continue to increase. The provision of adequate feedback to students and the dvelopment of appropriate marking systems concern us at present.

There is little doubt that professionals appreciate the ready access to up-to-date information, the ability to obtain further credentials, the opportunity to talk to other professionals about their own speciality, the chance to consult with other professionals and access which allows them to feel part of the mainstream in continuing education. The use of distance education delivery methods makes continuing professional education not only practicable but also preferable for the practicing professional since it allows for the provision of colleague interaction without removing learner independence.

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